

# Media Release

## OPIOID SURVEILLANCE

**July 25, 2023 - For immediate release**

Timiskaming Health Unit (THU) has launched an online opioid surveillance dashboard to help inform the community about the current opioid situation in the district.

Under the direction of the Ministry of Health, health units are responsible for having an early warning system in place to track, identify and respond to opioid-related incidents such as new or toxic substances circulating in our area and increases in poisonings.

The dashboard is part of THU's Opioid Response Plan and gathers information from provincial databases, local emergency services, partner agencies and the community. Information from community members can be submitted anonymously by using the online Bad Drug reporting form found on THU's website.

When increases in certain opioid-related incidents are identified, the health unit will issue a drug alert. Drug alerts are posted on THU's website and Facebook page and shared by email with health care providers, community partners, and harm reduction supply sites. When an alert is issued, THU will also increase harm reduction messaging and resources, with information on responding to an overdose, tips for safer drug use, the Good Samaritan Act and where to get naloxone and other harm reduction supplies.

"It's important to let people know when there are dangerous substances in the community that have been associated with increases in overdoses and poisoning. Unregulated substances can be toxic and cause harm to those who use them." says Erin Cowan, Director of Strategic Services and Health Promotion/Chief Nursing Officer at THU.

Other efforts to reduce harms associated with substance use includes work being done by Timiskaming Drug and Alcohol Strategy. Many community organizations and people with lived experience are working together in the areas of prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and community safety.

In Timiskaming, from January to June of this year, available data reveals there were 6 suspect drug-related deaths.

The health unit reminds anyone who uses drugs, or those who know someone who does, to follow these safer use tips:

- If possible, avoid using alone; if you are alone, call the [National Overdose Response Service](#) (NORS) virtual safe consumption at 1-888-668-NORS (6677), or call a friend.
- Test a small amount before you use.
- Avoid mixing drugs.
- Ensure that emergency services can be contacted in the event of an overdose.
- Keep a [naloxone kit](#) on hand. You can get a kit at pharmacies, health unit offices and other location listed on THU's website.
- Call 911 immediately if someone starts to show signs of an overdose and/or cannot be resuscitated after naloxone is administered.

The new Opioid Surveillance Dashboard, Bad Drug Reporting Form and information on local drug alerts can be found on the health unit's website at [www.timiskaminghu.com](http://www.timiskaminghu.com). For more information, please call 705-647-4305, Ext. 2232 or email [harm.reduction@timiskaminghu.com](mailto:harm.reduction@timiskaminghu.com).

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